

How Clearly Do You See God?

Apostolic Christian Counseling and Family Services

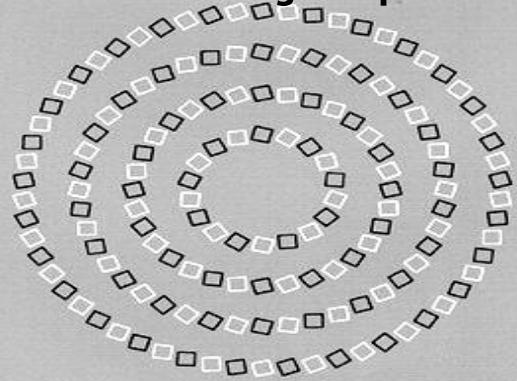
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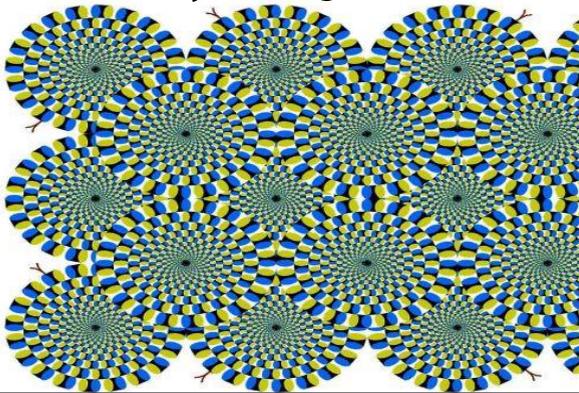
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Do You See Rings or Spirals?



Are They Moving or Stable?



Biblical Principles

- Absolute Truth does exist.
 - **John 14:6** "...I am the way, the truth, and the life..."
- Our perception of Truth does not alter or affect its reality.
 - **2 Kings 6** "they that be with us are more than they that be with them." (Elisha & his servant)
- Our understanding of God is limited.
 - **1 Corinthians 13:12** "For now we see through a glass, darkly..."
 - **Isaiah 55:9** "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Outline

1. Who is God?
2. Why Worship god?
3. Why is God interested in us?
4. Defining the God Concept and God Image.
5. Identifying distortions in our understanding of God.
6. Developing a more accurate understanding of God.

Who Is God?

He is.

"Unto thee it was showed, that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God; there is none else beside him."

Deuteronomy 4:35

Old and New Testament: He Is.

Exodus 3:14

*"And God said unto Moses, **I AM THAT I AM**: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, **I AM** hath sent me unto you."*

John 18:4-8

*"Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, **I am** he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, **I am** he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that **I am** he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:"*

God Always Is

Hebrews 13:8 *"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever."*

- God always exists in the present. With Him there is no past or future.
- God never "was" in the past.
- God never "will be" in the future.
- God simply is.
- God is not bound by time or space.

God is...

- Eternal
- Spirit
- All Powerful (Omnipotent)
- All Knowing (Omniscient)
- Everywhere (Omnipresent)
- Holy
- Righteous
- Truth
- Love
- Wisdom
- Self-existent
- Sovereign
- Immutable (unchanging)

Why Worship God?

He is holy.
He is worthy.
He created us.
He desires our worship.

He is Holy

Isaiah 6: 1-3

*"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, **Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.**"*

He is Worthy

Revelation
5: 12-13

*"Saying with a loud voice, **Worthy is the Lamb** that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."*

He Created Us

Psalm
139: 13-17

"For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!"

Father & Potter

Isaiah 64:8

"But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand."

He Desires Our Worship

John 4: 23-24

"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Worship Him Now or Later

Romans 14:11 *"For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."*

Everyone will fall down and bow before God.

- Believers will fall down in reverence and awe AND will then be raised up to enter heaven.
- Unbelievers will fall down in terror and regret AND will be ushered into eternal darkness.

Why Is God Interested In Us?

God is a relational being.
God created us to love us.
God created us unto good works.

He initiates.

1 John 4:19

"We love him, because he first loved us."

God is a
Relational Being

Genesis
1:26-27

*“And God said, **Let us make man in our image, after our likeness**; ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”*

God Created Us
to Love Us

Jeremiah
32: 38-40

“And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.”

God fashioned us
for Good Works

Ephesians
2:8-10

*“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”*

Defining The God Concept And The God Image

In Heaven we will
finally see
clearly!

1 Corinthians 3:12

“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

Understanding Your View of God

- Have you ever noticed you can **KNOW** something about God in your head, but you can't seem to **FEEL IT** in your heart?
- While on earth we will never be able to have a perfectly clear view of God, however we **DO NOT** have to carry **DISTORTED** images of God.
- One of the main reasons for the “Head-Heart” battle is human beings have two “pictures” of God that are not always compatible.

Understanding our "God Concept"

God Concept: your "head knowledge" about God.

- Your "God Concept" develops over time through learning about God and the Bible.
- Examples:
 - God created the world in 6 days.
 - Sin separates us from God.
 - He gave us the Bible.
 - Jesus died on the cross.
 - He wants all people to be saved.
 - God is love.

Understanding our "God Image"

God image: your "gut level" feelings about how you *believe* God feels toward you and relates to you.

- Your "God Image" develops over time through:
 - Your relationship with major attachment figures - primarily Father and Mother.
 - Critical incidents and traumatic life experiences.
 - Authority figures that taught you about God.

Results of a Distorted "God Image"

- Many people are not consciously aware of the distortions of their "God Image."
- A distorted "God Image" may lead to difficulty trusting God and submitting to God and His Word.
 - It may also lead us to have faulty expectations of God.
- **Unless we make intention decisions to otherwise**, when all is said and done, most of the time we react to life out of what we feel in our "heart," even though we know differently in our "head."

Identifying Distortions In Our Understanding Of God

How the Lens We Use Changes What We See

- If the lenses in your glasses were green, how would it affect what you saw?
- If you had a father who was overbearing, controlling, and critical, how do you think it might affect your view of other authority figures?
- If you were abandoned as a child, how do you think it might affect your feelings about being securely and safely attached to others?

Common God Image Distortions

- **The God of Impossible Expectations** – viewing God as never being pleased, always 'raising the bar,' and perfectionistically pointing out your failures.
- **The Emotionally Distant God** – viewing God as only truly feeling love toward you when you are happy; and angry/disappointed with you when you are sad, down, or worried.
- **The Disinterested God** – viewing God as if He looks at you with a "why are you bothering Me again?" mindset.

Common Distortions Cont'd

- **The Unreliable God** - viewing God as abandoning you when you need him most, often in your darkest hour.
 - That is, when the going gets tough, He leaves you stranded.
- **The Rug-Pulling God** – viewing God as waiting to “pull the rug out” from underneath you when things are going well.
 - That is, just when you think things are going well, He’s going to “get” you with something negative (like an illness, tragedy, etc.)
- **The Abusive God** - viewing God as enjoying seeing you in pain and as wanting to rob you of joy.
 - Seeing Him as being vindictive and “playing” with your life as if you are a pawn.

Overly Positive Distortions

- **The Cosmic Buddy** – viewing God as universally loving without seeing a need to respond to His call to holiness.
 - You see God as loving you with blind acceptance without ANY expectations of how you should submit your life to Him, change your behavior, or deny yourself.
- **The Vending Machine** – viewing God as a vending machine from which you can get what you want, when you want it.
 - If something doesn’t turn out the way you wanted, you get angry at God for not responding like you thought He should.

Which Describes God the Father? Jesus the Son? The Holy Spirit?

- | | | |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| ▪ Holy | ▪ Gracious | ▪ Guiding |
| ▪ Righteous | ▪ Merciful | ▪ Truthful |
| ▪ Powerful | ▪ Forgiving | ▪ Omnipresent |
| ▪ Omnipotent | ▪ Patient | ▪ Convicting |
| ▪ Hates sin | ▪ Loving | ▪ Omniscient |
| ▪ Creator | ▪ Kind | ▪ Comforting |
| ▪ Sovereign | ▪ Healing | |
| ▪ Immutable | | |

The Bible Says that Each Member of the Trinity is...

- | | | |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| ▪ Comforting | ▪ Loving | ▪ Omnipotent |
| ▪ Merciful | ▪ Truthful | ▪ Righteous |
| ▪ Powerful | ▪ Gracious | ▪ Forgiving |
| ▪ Omnipresent | ▪ Patient | ▪ Convicting |
| ▪ Hates sin | ▪ Omniscient | ▪ Guiding |
| ▪ Creator | ▪ Holy | ▪ Kind |
| ▪ Immutable | ▪ Sovereign | ▪ Healing |

A Very Common God Image Distortion

- A common, but distorted, way to view the Trinity is to see:
 - God the Father as stern, difficult to approach, and austere.
 - Jesus the Son as understanding, approachable, and kind.
 - The Holy Spirit as a friendly ghost.
 - Can you identify what is wrong with this picture?

Correcting the Distortion

- Remember the Trinity is three Persons in One. That is, while they are each distinct, they ultimately share the same character, nature, and attributes.
- A Biblical picture:
 - While God is Holy, He is also the God of all comfort!
 - While Jesus is approachable and kind, He will also return in judgment with a sword coming out of His mouth!
 - While the Holy spirit is mysterious, He is also knowable and present in our lives!

Developing A More Accurate Understanding Of God

GRACE & TRUTH

*"Sanctify them through thy truth: Thy word is truth."
John 17:17*

1. Pray to See God More Clearly

- Ask God to reveal Himself to you more clearly.
- Ask God to make you aware of any ways where your view of Him is clouded by distortions in your:
 1. God Concept – “head knowledge”
 2. God Image – “gut-level”

2a. Don't Force Your Own Meanings Onto the Scripture

Distortions (both major and minor) in understanding God often occur when:

1. We read our own meanings into Scriptural passages or take things ***out of context***. (also called *Eisegesis*)
2. We superimpose our life experiences onto the Word.

2b. Let Scripture Be Your Lens

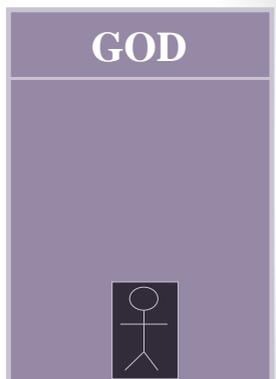
Getting to know the God of the Bible and “clearing” distorted lenses can occur when:

- We take what the Bible says ***in context*** and then draw the meaning out of the passage (also called *Exegesis*).
- We superimpose the Word onto our life experiences.

3. Exercise: Draw a Picture

Directions: Draw a picture of God out of your “gut level feelings” and not your head. No artistic ability is required.

Example: One person said, “I feel like I am in a 100 story building with God on the top floor. I’m in the right building and I’m even in the elevator pushing the button to go up; but the elevator doesn’t work.”



4. Balance Grace & Truth

- **Grace:** God's unmerited love, favor, and strength.
- **Truth:** God's holiness, perfection, and righteousness.
- God's Grace and Truth cannot be separated: A biblical concept of God contains ***both without violating the other***.
 - Grace *without* Truth isn't Grace: It's license.
 - Truth *without* Grace isn't Truth: It's condemnation.

Two Inseparable Concepts

John 1:14

*"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of **grace and truth**."*

John 1:17

*"For the law was given by Moses, but **grace and truth** came by Jesus Christ."*

Colossians 1:6

*"Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the **grace of God in truth**."*

God the Father: Grace and Truth

• God of Grace: 1 Corinthians 1:3-4

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

• God of Truth: 2 Peter 3:10-11

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness"

A quote regarding the tendency for people go to extremes...

"I feel a strong desire to tell you- and I expect you feel a strong desire to tell me- which of these two errors is the worse. That is the devil getting at us. He always sends errors into the world in pairs- pairs of opposites. And he always encourages us to spend a lot of time thinking which is the worse. You see why, of course? He relies on your extra dislike of the one error to draw you gradually into the opposite one. But do not let us be fooled. We have to keep our eyes on the goal and go straight through between both errors. We have no other concern than that with either of them." – C.S. Lewis

5. Learning about the Father Through the Son

2 Corinthians 4:3-4

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

Colossians 1:13-15

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature."

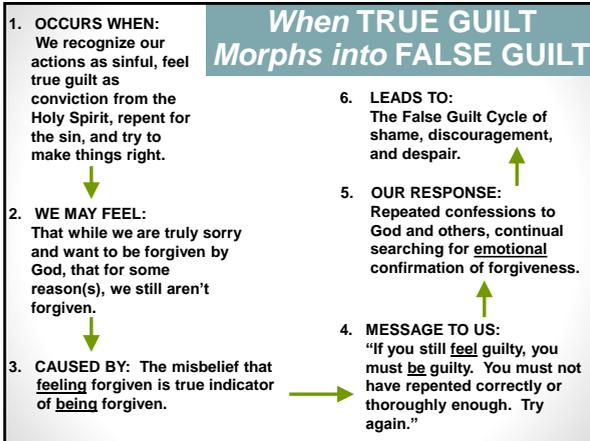
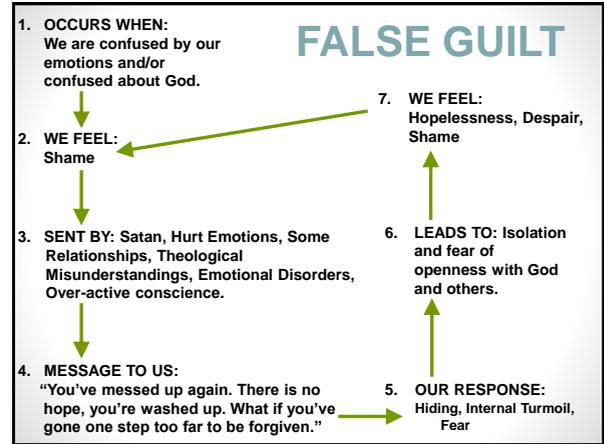
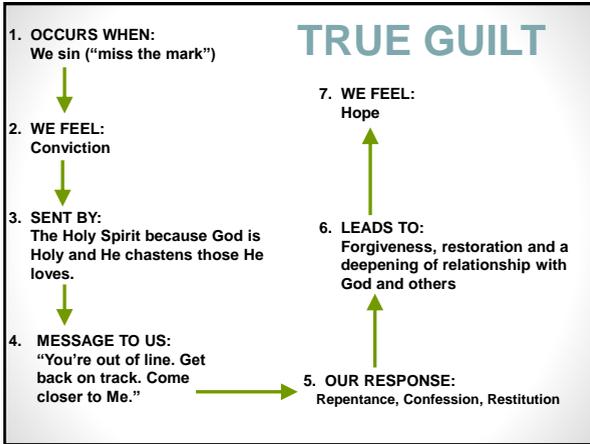
His Glory
His Image
His Person
His Power

Hebrews 1:2-3

*"Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of **his glory**, and the **express image of his person**, and upholding all things by the word of **his power**, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."*

6. Distinguish Between True and False Guilt

- True guilt is spiritually and emotionally healthy and moves us to take appropriate action to deal with sin.
- False guilt is always unhealthy, both spiritually and emotionally.



7. Christian Meditation

- Spend time focusing and contemplating on God, the Word, and His promises.
- Allow the Holy Spirit to teach you .
- Christian meditation differs from unbiblical forms of meditation in that:
 - It focuses our minds on the Word.
 - It focuses our minds on God's promises.
 - It focuses our minds on God's character.
 - It helps us get perspective on who God is and who we are.

Christian Meditation

- Read and meditate on the *Psalm 103* (or *Psalm 139*) every day for a week taking time consider what each verse means.
- Review and meditate on God's promises to believers.
 - ACCFS has document you can use.
- Sit quietly and mediate on verses like "Be still and know I am God (*Psalm 46:10*) or "Peace, be still (*Mark 4:39*) "
- Contact ACCFS for additional resources.

8. Get Someone Else's Perspective

- It is hard for us to see our own distortions; sometimes we don't see them at all.
- It is very helpful to work through God image distortions with the help of a mature brother or sister in Christ (e.g., parents, a mentor, or an elder/minister).

9. Counseling

- Painful life experiences can greatly shape, distort, and skew your God image to a degree.
- For example, God image distortions are common for people who grew up in dysfunctional families and those who have experienced abuse.
- For some people, counseling can be very helpful to work through emotional, relational, and spiritual hurts.
- Don't hesitate to talk with your elder/ministers or ACCFS if you have questions about this or would like to talk to someone.

10. Trust in God's Ability to Heal

"For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." -- Isaiah 51:3